



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 153

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2007

No. 146

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, October 1, 2007, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2007

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, guide our lawmakers today as they seek to do Your will. Deliver them from anger and envy, from harsh thoughts and unlovable actions. Use them to make a better world. Remind them that You are the only constituent they must please, for You are the Sovereign God. Inspire them to decrease that You may increase and illuminate our world with Your glory. Give them the wisdom to seek You often in prayer with grateful hearts. Lord, guard their hearts and minds with Your peace. Help them to turn their struggles into stepping stones that will glorify You. We pray in Your holy Name. Amen

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SHERROD BROWN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 28, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate will begin consideration shortly of the Department of Defense authorization bill. Last night cloture was invoked on the substitute amendment. Therefore, amendments in order need to have been timely filed and be germane.

There will be no rollcall votes today, but the managers will be here to process amendments. Senator KENNEDY is here to talk about the first amendment.

The next vote will occur Monday beginning around 5:30 in the evening. This week has been a very busy week, and the Senate has successfully concluded action on a number of very important measures. Mr. President, next

week we are going to, as soon as we finish this bill, the Defense authorization bill—which will be sometime Monday night—move to Defense appropriations. Senators INOUE and STEVENS have been advised of that. They will start early Tuesday morning. We hope to complete that bill within a couple of days.

The next bill we will take up prior to our October recess will be the Commerce-Justice-State appropriations bill. If we can finish those two bills, and I think we have a real opportunity to do that, we will have completed 6 of the 12 appropriations bills.

The House has completed all of theirs. I have had a number of conversations with Chairman OBEY, with the Speaker, in an effort to get these bills—as many as we can, as soon as we can—to the President.

As you know, there is a controversy with the President over his threats to veto all of these bills. We hope he will see the wisdom of moving forward on these appropriations bills, as we hope he will on the Children's Health Insurance Program which passed overwhelmingly yesterday.

I would say that last year, for example, the President accepted bills from the Republican-dominated Congress that were \$55 billion over what he suggested. This year we are at \$21 billion and none of that is extravagant spending. Most of it are things he has cut out of the budget, so it would only keep up with inflation. For example, with the tremendous rise in crime we have all over America today—we have had a jump this last year like we have not seen in recent decades. Aggravated

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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crimes are up significantly, and we have a situation where we are putting in this legislation—I have talked about these appropriations bills—\$1.5 billion to make up for what we took out of the COPS Program. We have 100,000 less police officers on the street than we did. That is a result of the cuts of the President. So we hope he will see the light and do the right thing in regard to the appropriations bills.

But I very much appreciate the cooperation we received from the Republicans with our appropriations bills to this point. We have not had great difficulty with those bills. We all know we should have gotten to them sooner, but we have had 48 filibusters we have had to deal with this year which have slowed things down significantly.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 2693

Mr. REID. Mr. President, H.R. 2693 is at the desk and due for its second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2693) to direct the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to issue a standard regulating worker exposure to diacetyl.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would object to any further proceedings at that time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Without objection, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this bill deals with something that has developed. We would never dream we would be working on it, but it appears to be very important. We have had a lot of deaths and people getting sick, the popcorn workers in America, which is a huge industry. We are going to try to see if we can set some standards so people do not get sick by virtue of working around popcorn.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1585, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Nelson (NE) (for Levin) amendment No. 2011, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid (for Kennedy) amendment No. 3058 (to amendment No. 2011), to provide for certain public-private competition requirements.

Reid (for Kennedy) amendment No. 3109 (to amendment No. 3958), to provide for certain public-private competition requirements.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, the distinguished chairman, Senator LEVIN, and I are prepared to go forward with any amendments. We are anxious to have Members bring those amendments to the floor.

At this time, I see one of my colleagues seeking recognition.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the late Arthur Helton, perhaps our country's greatest advocate for the rights of refugees, wrote:

Refugees matter . . . for a wide variety of reasons. . . . Refugees are a product of humanity's worst instincts, the willingness of some persons to oppress others, as well as some of its best instincts, the willingness of many to assist and protect the helpless. . . .

A year after he wrote those words, Arthur Helton was killed in Baghdad in 2003 when a bomb destroyed the U.N. headquarters in Iraq. His words still resonate today, especially when we consider the immense human cost of the war in Iraq and its tragic effect on the millions of Iraqis—men, women, and children—who have fled their homes, their country, to escape the violence of a nation at war with itself.

These brave and heroic Iraqis work with the American military, staff our embassy, and work with American organizations to support our mission in Iraq. They are among the 4 million Iraqi refugees who have been forced from their homes. They are the people we have an obligation to help.

Instead of protection, we have offered them bureaucracy and doublespeak, false words and dubious hopes. Despite the overwhelming need, the U.S. has resettled less than 2,000 Iraqis this fiscal year. Last night, the Senate acted and stood up to help Iraqi refugees.

I thank Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN for adopting our amendment, the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2007. I thank Senator WARNER as well. This was cosponsored by a bipartisan group of Senators: Senators SMITH, LEVIN, HAGEL, BIDEN, BROWNBACK, LIEBERMAN, LEAHY, SNOWE, DURBIN, VOINOVICH, FEINSTEIN, COLLINS, OBAMA, DOLE, MENENDEZ, MIKULSKI, and CLINTON.

The need is especially urgent for those whose work for the United States has put them in danger. Because they supported us, insurgents have repeatedly threatened to kill them. Many have lost their homes, their property, their livelihoods. They face ongoing threats every single day. Some have fled the country and are waiting in refugee camps, and others are in hiding. All of them hope the United States will not forget their sacrifices.

Still others have tried to flee, only to be stopped at the border, trapped in a

country that cannot protect them, abandoned by a country, our country, that they believed would set them free. Others continue their work, living in fear of the day that the insurgents punish them for working for Americans. They are women such as Sarah, whose husband worked as an interpreter for the coalition forces in a combat hospital. Although he kept his job secret, insurgents discovered his identity. They broke into his family home, kidnapped her and released her only after torturing and raping her.

The family fled to a neighboring country where they have waited for almost a year in the hopes of qualifying for refugee status. Sarah's husband has been forced to return to Iraq. Each day that passes without assistance brings the rest of the family closer to an involuntary return to Iraq.

She wrote: Dear gentlemen: I put my suffering between your hands as my hope in you is great that you will hear our calling.

And there are men such as Sami who worked for USAID. He received several death threats, one in the form of a blood-soaked bullet sealed in an envelope. Sami pressed on, despite the threats, in order to help improve local governments and strengthen civil society.

In June 2006, a group of men armed with machine guns attempted to kidnap his pregnant wife and 2-year-old son outside their home. The attack was thwarted, but his wife nearly miscarried and his son suffered prolonged shock. Sami and his family fled to Jordan where they live day to day waiting for the labyrinthine process to rule on their refugee case. Our Government owes these Iraqis an immense debt of gratitude. Many American employees owe their lives to those Iraqis.

Despite the clear and present danger many Iraqis face based on their ties to the United States, their religious affiliation, or their work with media, nongovernmental and humanitarian organizations, the vast majority of Iraqi refugees must go through a long and complicated referral process of approximately 8 to 10 months, in which the United Nations serves as an intermediary. There are no provisions for conducting refugee screenings within Iraq as there should be.

In a recent cable, Ambassador Crocker asked the administration to reconsider its practices. He estimates that under the current practices it would take more than 2 years to process the over 10,000 referrals made by the United Nations. As Ambassador Crocker noted:

Clearly, this is too long. Refugees who have fled Iraq continue to be a vulnerable population while living in Jordan and Syria.

Ambassador Crocker asked for the authority to process refugees in Iraq. He asked for the authority to provide special immigrant visas for those who have worked in good faith with our Government in Iraq. He asked to expedite the processing of refugee claims to